THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (DR. C.P. THAKUR): (a) to (d) A new Centrally Sponsored Scheme on "On-Farm Water Management for increasing Crop Production in Eastern India" has been formulated by the Ministry of Agriculture for operation during the remaining priod of 9th Five Year Plan. The scheme has not yet been approved. The productivity of fopdgrain crops particularly rice, a major crop of the Eastern parts of India is generally low compared to-other parts of the country. There is a scope for increasing area and production of foodgrains particulariy rice during rabi and summer seasons, if additional irrigation infrastructure is provided. A majority of farmers in the Eastern region are small and marginal who are not in a position to develop on-farm irrigation resources and providing assistance to them for the development of On-Farm Water Resources will help in their betterment. The salient features of the scheme include assistance for construction of shallow tube wells, community lift irrigation points, supply of electric/'thesel pumping sets, demonstration of water management technoloogy and production of breeder/foundation/ certified seeds. Funds have not been earmarked for the State of Assam, as the scheme has not been approved. Assam does not come under the purview of the Ganga Action Plan.

Interest Rates on Small Savings

*233. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are thinking of pruning interest rates on small savings, provident funds, etc.;

(b) if so, whether it would result in diverting small investments from Government schemes to other investment schemes offering higher rates of interest; and

(c) what are the anticipated advantages likely to accrue to Government by lowering interest rates?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) At present there is no proposal of reducing the interest rates on small savings schemes and provident funds, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Daily Allowance Drawn by TRAI Members

*234. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:
SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Mmister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that TRAI members had drawn a daily allowance of US $500 as obseryed by the *C&AC* and reported in a section of the Press;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that such an allowance is more than those drawn by the executives of US administration—the" highest paid in the world;

(c) if so, the details thereof and under which statutory provision' this has been done; and

(d) the response of Govemment thereto and any corrective action contemplated thereof?

-THE MINISTERY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS' PASWAN): (a) to (d) The C&AG in Chapter IV [Para 4.5.1.(i)] of his Report No. 4 of 1999—Other Autonomous Bothes presented to the Parliament on 29.10.1999 has inter alia observed as under:—

> "the per them halting allowance rates of TRAL were higher than the rates prescribed for the officers of Intematiofial Civil Service"'of United Nations which is the highest paid Civil Service in the world ..... The Uniform TRAI rates of US $500 was much higher than (he U.N. rates even in the costliest cities like London, New York, Geneva, Singapore, Paris and Tokyo."

The Govt:' has since issued orders regularising the expenditure incurred by Chairperson and Members from the date of assumption of their office till 14.3.99. For the period from 15.3.99 onwards the terms and conditions of their service are governed by the notifications issued by Govt, in terms of Section 35(2)(a) of the TRAI Act along with certain relaxations arid additional facilities